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POETRY.

FOR THE NORTH-AMERICAN JOURNAL.

Sir,

AT your request, I send you a translation of another Satire of Boileau's. It is the one in which he complains of the difficulties of rhyme; a subject to which he frequently recurred in his writings, and which, to a versifier of such force and accuracy, was no imaginary grievance.

To the Editor.

Translation of the second Satire of Boileau, addressed to Moliere.

The Poet complaineth of the difficulties of Rhyme.

O blest Moliere ! whose rich and wondrous mind
Knows not the torments of the scribbling kind,
Who, born to write with unembarrass'd ease,
The choicest phrase canst ev'n instinctive seize,
Thou, to whom Phœbus spreads out all his store,
And gives the skill to coin Parnassian ore ;
Teach me, great prince of mental carte-and-tierce,
The art of Rhyme, the mystery of Verse !

Yes, one might say, that if thou dost but look,
Lo, Rhyme flies down, and lights upon thy book !
None ever saw *thee* at a verse's end
Stumble, and fret, and vainly strive to mend,
Nor wait and waste whole hours of precious time ;
For thou but speak'st, and *presto !* there's a rhyme.

But I, alas ! whom some ill-humour'd star
Plung'd for my sins amidst the rhyming war,
Who drive with toil this suicidal trade,
Must never win the stubborn jingling maid.
Oft in brown study wrapt from morn to night,
I would say *black*, but she still echoes *white*.

I wish to name some fine-bred soul—and sure,
 My pen *will* blunder on the Abbé Pure !*
 And when I strive a faultless bard to show,
 Reason says Virgil, but the Rhyme, Quinaut.†
 In fine, whate'er I do, whate'er I say,
 'The gypsey bears her just the other way.
 Sometimes, indeed, o'orwhelm'd with gall and rage,
 I lose all heart the desperate game to wage,
 And cursing o'er and o'er my guardian sprite,
 Vow and resolve me never more to write.
 But when I've enter'd on the blest design,
 And quite renounc'd Apollo and the Nine,
 And stalk away with due indignant pace,
 Rhyme comes unsought, and stares me in the face.
 Then, then again the sacred itch returns,
 Spite of resolves, my wonted hankering burns,
 I seize, with giddy triumph, on the pen,
 Spread a full quire before my eyes, and then
 Gaze upon nothing, and serenely dumb
 Wait very patient for more rhyme to come.
 But midst all this, there is a trouble still,
 My Muse is curs'd with a fastidious will;
 Could I but coax her not to fume and care
 About a stale expression here and there,
 I might, like others, scribble as I please,
 And string whole pages with a world of ease.
 Thus, if I sung, *Thee, Phillis, beauty decks,*
 How pat would follow, *Glory of thy sex!*
 If of some maid I vow'd, *She yields to none,*
 Quick I'd respond with—*Fairer than the sun.*
 And thus, with *lovely stars* and *wondrous eyes,*
 And *charms divine,* and *offspring of the skies.*
 And more such pretty words at random thrown,
 Unhaunted with ideas of my own,
 Shifting a hundred times the noun and verb,
 Among my works I'd shew you all Malherbe.‡
 But oh the pity ! I've a squeamish mind,
 To pick and choose too tremblingly inclin'd,

* This Abbé, says the French Editor, affected an air of “propreté” and “gallanterie,” although, he slyly continues, he was “ni propre ni galant.”

† I have reverted to the original orthography of this name, in consequence of some respectable criticisms.

‡ Malherbe was a fine poet, notwithstanding the above damnatory coup-de-main, and Boileau has elsewhere born testimony to his merits.

Which, if a phrase be not quite appropos,
Sends it, most cruelly—to Jericho—
And, Fool ! forbids a rhyme a sheltering place,
Merely because that rhyme is flat and base.
Thus in the chase of phrases and of rhymes,
Writing each poem through some twenty times ;
I soil with blots, most foul, my pages o'er,
And, of my lines, erase full three in four.

Wo to the man whose rash insensate brain
First bound his thoughts in rhyme's enthralling chain,
And quitting Prose, and Reason's blest resorts,
Broke language down to paltry longs and shorts,
Without this art, the torment of my life,
My days had known nor envy, care, nor strife ;
I should have drank and play'd, and sung and laugh'd,
And nought but laugh'd and sung, and play'd and quaff'd.
Like some fat Canon, I had breath'd content,
Ne'er vex't with business, ne'er with toil o'erspent,
But whilst my time roll'd carelessly away,
Had slept all night, and idle'd all the day.
No anxious passion then had torn my heart,
Nor vain ambition shar'd so large a part,
Nor of delusive hopes the constant sport,
Had I bow'd down at Fortune's shrine at Court.
Ah me, too blest, but for some unknown crime,
Malicious demons whisper'd, Take to rhyme.

But since that fatal hour when phrenzy stole,
Wrapt in black vapours, on my troubled soul,
When the fell fiend, too envious of my bliss,
Taught me—" Now blot that line, now polish this,"—
Inexorable cares my mind engage,
Mending a sentence, cancelling a page—
Passing a life, in short, of taste and fear,
Gods ! how I sigh to write like Pelletiere.

Thou, too, Scuderi,* thou, whose fertile quill
Kittens full once a month, nor suffers ill,
'Tis true, thy writings, languid, flat, and dense,
Seem bravely to defy all common sense ;
But care thou not ! whatever people say,
While Dolts will print them, Fools will take away.

* A writer of insipid Romances, without number and without end

And if the rhyme but jingles smooth and strong,
 Why let the grammar and the sense be wrong.
 Wo worth the wight, who tries the luckless part,
 To guide his genius by the rules of art.
 Your Dunce feels far more pleasure as *he* writes—
 From growing nonsense gathering new delights.
 Unknown to him the task, so dull, so sad,
 To choose the worthy, and refuse the bad ;
 Still as he writes, a self-complacent smile
 Dimples across, from ear to ear, the while.
 Enamour'd of each brat his brain brings forth,
 He marvels how such beauties *can* have birth.

Not so the lofty soul by genius curst,
 Who, following fame, still struggles to be first,
 Burning for perfect excellence, in vain
 He strives to reach the far ideal strain,
 And still the last his heavenly skill to own,
 Charms the whole world—except himself alone—
 While Wit and Taste delight to name his name,
 His ears are weary'd with the noise of fame,
 Known and admir'd in regions far remote,
 He sighs, alarm'd, to think he ever wrote.

Then, lov'd Moliere ! who witnessest my plight,
 O let my Muse find favour in thy sight.
 By all the virtues of that gentle heart,
 Teach me, oh teach thy friend, the rhyming art ;
 Or since that task would prove too vainly sore,
 Teach me the better art—to rhyme no more.

Erratum.—In the Third Satire, published in the last number of this Journal, for *nothing* read *nought*, in the following line:

“ I—who doat upon *nothing* like enlargement of station.”

Translation of some of Boileau's Epigrams.

EPITAPH.

Beneath this stone, and much regretted, lies
 One of no science, yet both learn'd and wise ;
 * A gentleman—and yet of humble birth—
 And though no *saint*, a man of sterling worth.

* The force of this antithesis was better felt in the court of Louis XIV, than it can be in this our land of many-traded, many-coloured *gentlemen*. The turn in the next line must be taken in a fanatical acceptance, and then it will not give offence.